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AGRICULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD PLAN

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I. DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE

India is at present engaged in the mighty task of national reconstruction. Giant dams and huge industrial projects are springing up and "these modern temples", as the Prime Minister calls them, "are changing the face of the country". The first two five-year Plans, which marked the initial phase in the fulfilment of the economic and social objectives of India's planned development, have brought the country to the threshold of a self-generating economy—an economy which can move on its own strength and resources.

Though our industrial development has been impressive during recent years, India remains basically an agricultural country. Half of the national income is derived from agriculture. Nearly 300 million people depend on the land for their livelihood; but productivity is low. It is therefore necessary to make agriculture more efficient, productive and profitable in order to provide a higher standard of living and a more balanced and adequate diet for all. Moreover, the country's population is increasing at the rate of about two per cent annually, with a corresponding increase in the demand for foodgrains. Finally, we need to step up the production of other agricultural commodities such as cotton, jute, oilseeds, etc., to meet the raw material needs of the rapidly increasing industries, as well as for export. Increased agricultural production thus holds the key to the rapid economic development of the country.

It is for this reason that in the Third Five Year Plan the first priority has been given to the development of agriculture and the rural economy. The Plan provides a total outlay of Rs. 1,025 crores for Agriculture and for Community Development, which has a crucial role to play in bringing about the desired increase in agricultural production. This is in addition to Rs. 650 crores for major and medium irrigation projects, Rs. 105 crores for rural electrification and Rs. 240 crores for the production of fertilizers. This outlay in the public sector is to be supplemented by an investment of Rs. 800 crores on agriculture in the private sector. In making year to year allocations, supplementary resources will be provided, if necessary, for specific programmes to achieve the targets of additional production.

Diversified and Intensive System of Agriculture

The long-term objective of the Third Plan is to evolve a diversified and intensive system of agriculture, including animal husbandry, dairying, poultry and fisheries. The success of agricultural development on these lines is, however, intimately connected with the adoption of scientific methods of agriculture, fuller utilization of manpower resources in the rural areas and the mobilization of local efforts to the full, and the reorganization of the rural economy along cooperative lines.

Targets of Agricultural Production

India has been working to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains during the last few years, but

without full success. Though during the last 10 years agricultural production has increased by 28 million tons or 31 per cent, it has not been adequate. During the Third Plan, however, it is hoped that the goal of self-sufficiency would be achieved. Production of foodgrains during the Third Plan period will be increased from 75 million tons at the beginning of the Plan to 100-105 million tons, representing an increase of 33 to 40 per cent. This target has been determined on the basis of the requirements of the expanding population and the increase in per capita intake.

From the standpoint of total quantity and balanced nutrition, the production of subsidiary foods like vegetables, fruits, poultry and livestock products and fish will also be accelerated. In the case of cash crops, like jute and cotton, the aim will be not only to achieve self-sufficiency, but ensure higher production to enable the country to export and earn the much-needed foreign exchange.

The targets proposed for other important agricultural commodities, which collectively indicate an increase by nearly one-third, are as follows:—

Commodity	Unit	Target of total production in 1965-66	Percentage increase during 1965-66 over 1960-61
Oilseeds	million tons	9.2-9.5	28-32
Sugarcane	,,	9.0-9.2	25-28
Cotton	million bales	7.2	33
Jute	,,	6.5	18
Coconut	million nuts	5,750	28
Arecanut	thousand tons	100	8
Cashewnut	,,	150	106

Pepper	thousand tons	30	3
Cardamom	,,	2.62	16
Lac	,,	62	24
Tabacco	,,	325	8
Tea	million lb.	850	17
Coffee	thousand tons	80	78
Rubber	,,	45	71
All commodities		—	30-33

More Food and Cloth

The fulfilment of the above targets, it is estimated, will make available to the common man in India some of his basic needs in life. For instance, it will allow each individual to consume about 15 oz. of cereals and 3 oz. of pulses per day, besides providing for some margin against emergencies. The production of raw cotton is expected to be sufficient to provide 17.5 yards of cotton textiles per annum, besides allowing for export.

How to Achieve the Targets?

The above targets are proposed to be achieved through the participation of millions of peasant families in village production plans and in other large-scale agricultural programmes already under way. The manpower resources available in the rural areas are to be effectively harnessed by popular village institutions like panchayats for putting in intensive work in each area. The major programmes around which intensive work is to be organized in each area are: (1) fuller utilization of irrigation, and maintenance of field channels, (2) soil conservation, dry farming and land reclamation, (3) utilization of improved seeds, fertilizers and

manures, and (4) better ploughs and other improved implements.

Irrigation and Dry Farming

It is estimated that large and medium projects as well as various minor irrigation schemes will bring 90 million acres under irrigation by the end of the Third Plan period, as against 70 million acres by 1960-61. In the unirrigated areas, dry farming is to be extended to 40 million acres, soil conservation measures to an additional area of 13 million acres, and flood control, drainage and water-logging measures to 5 million acres.

Fertilizers

During the Third Plan, the consumption of nitrogenous fertilizers will be increased from about 360,000 tons (in terms of nitrogen) in 1960-61 to 1 million tons in 1965-66 and of phosphatic fertilizers from 67,000 tons to about 400,000 to 500,000 tons. Programmes relating to green manuring and urban composting will benefit additional areas covering 50 million acres and 24 million acres respectively.

Multiplication of Improved Seeds

To provide sufficient improved seeds, an area of 150 million acres is proposed to be covered under the seed multiplication programme during the Third Plan period.

Improved Agricultural Implements

The adoption of improved agricultural techniques implies the use of improved agricultural im-

plements. Their programmes of development relate to (1) the selection and distribution of improved implements, (2) training of village blacksmiths and carpenters, and (3) closer cooperation between research and extension agencies and those engaged in the manufacture of implements. Arrangements are to be made in every State to establish at least one centre for the manufacture of improved agricultural implements. Other manufacturers would turn to it for technical advice, designs and other guidance.

II. ROLE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A major responsibility for implementing the various agricultural programmes envisaged in the Third Plan has been placed on the Community Development organization, working through Extension services which will cover the entire country by October 1963. It was eight years ago, on October 2—the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi—that the C.D. Programme was initiated in certain selected areas. The purpose was to achieve an integrated advance in all spheres of rural life. While the broad aim is still the same, the organization will now concentrate on fully utilizing local manpower and other resources through Extension workers and a network of *panchayati* institutions and cooperatives for achieving the production targets. On the progress achieved in mobilizing the village communities for increasing agricultural production, depends the solution of every other problem of the rural population. That is so because once the capacity to produce has been created other benefits follow quickly enough to meet the changing needs of the rural community. Thus, the principal test for the success of Community Development Programme at a time when the growth of agricultural production is of such critical importance, is its effectiveness as an agricultural Extension agency. Indeed, of the allocation of Rs. 400 crores for Community Development in the Third Plan, a third of the expenditure bears directly on agricultural production.

Reorientation of the Community Development Organization

The Draft Outline of the Third Plan has indicated lines on which the Community Development Programme should be orientated to enable it to make its full contribution towards achieving the targets of agricultural production on the basis of the widest possible participation of local communities. These are discussed below:

Intensive Effort

It has been stressed in the Draft Outline that sufficient resources should be provided for essential agricultural programmes and that every Community Development block should become an area of intensive effort in which all development agencies of the Government should work together as a team in cooperation with the local leadership represented in panchayats and cooperatives. The Extension personnel has to assist in creating conditions in which the entire community can put forth its best efforts and utilize the local manpower and other resources to the greatest advantage. Agricultural Departments in the States are to place at the disposal of the Community Development organization at the block, district and other levels technical skill, essential supplies, trained personnel and other resources required to make the programme a success.

Minor Irrigation Programmes

Secondly, it has been pointed out that in the past minor irrigation programmes tended to be-

come programmes of small-scale irrigation works executed by Government agencies with little voluntary labour. It is proposed that minor irrigation, soil conservation, contour bunding and dry farming programmes should be regarded in all States as essentially community programmes in which local contribution in terms of money and labour should play a leading role. Under the Third Plan no scheme pertaining to these programmes, especially minor irrigation works, is to be undertaken without adequate investigation of its economic and technical aspects. In this way, it will be possible to obtain still better results.

Improved Implements

Thirdly, the provision of facilities, including credit for the adoption of improved implements, should be taken up as a primary extension programme.

Streamlining of Administrative Machinery

In the fourth place, the administrative machinery of the Community Development organization should be streamlined to increase its efficiency and to make its role as an Extension agency more effective. It is stressed that the organization should eliminate overlappings in the programme. Since the success of village production plans will depend upon the quick movement of supplies and the easy availability of technical advice to villagers, it is essential that there should be complete co-ordination between the Departments of Agriculture, Irri-

gation, Animal Husbandry and Community Development and those of Cooperation and Panchayats.

Role of Extension Personnel

The fifth direction indicated is that with the increased emphasis on the C.D. organization functioning as an agricultural Extension agency, the activities of the multi-purpose village level worker should primarily be confined to the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation and panchayats. Other fields are mainly the concern of village institutions and the village level worker has to assist them indirectly.

To enable the village level worker to serve continuously in the same area for achieving better results, it has been suggested that he should serve 1,000 to 2,000 families for a sufficient period of time. In this way, he will get to know the cultivators and their problems more closely and identify himself with them as one of the members of the local community.

Village Production Plans

In the sixth place, it has been stressed that the task of rebuilding the rural economy will ultimately devolve upon efforts at the village level. To this end, it has been suggested that each village should have its own production plans in which all cultivators in the village will have a part.

The village production plan will include two main groups of programmes: (1) digging of field channels for utilizing irrigation from larger pro-

jects, maintenance of bunds and field channels, contour bunding, digging and maintenance of village tanks, green manuring, composting, etc., that is programmes which depend on efforts on the part of the local community itself, and (2) supply of credit, fertilizers and improved seeds, assistance in respect of plant protection and undertaking of minor irrigation works. Through these plans and programmes Extension workers will be able to reach all the farmers in the village and mobilize effectively the efforts of the local community.

Panchayats and cooperatives, assisted and guided by Extension workers will bear the primary responsibility for drawing up and implementing these plans. The panchayat, it is pointed out, is in the best position to visualize the village production plan as a whole and, in particular, to arrange for the execution of programmes requiring the united effort of the entire village community or of groups of beneficiaries. The village cooperatives, on the other hand, can provide the specific assistance required by individual cultivators by way of credit and supplies. It is stressed that collaboration between panchayats and cooperatives is necessary at each stage in the preparation and implementation of the village production plan.

The Draft Outline has urged that village panchayats, cooperatives and the national Extension agency should ensure that each family makes use of improved seeds, fertilizers and organic and green manures on its holdings and that every family is assisted with short-term credits in cash or kind or both to enable them to do so.

To start with, it may not be possible to prepare elaborate plans for individual families, but, as the village cooperative societies become more broad-based and cover almost every family, the formulation of a village production programme will become more comprehensive and realistic.

Block Plans

Seventhly, it has been recommended that the State Five Year Plan should be drawn up on the basis of block plans, especially in respect of (1) agriculture, including minor irrigation works, soil conservation, village forests, animal husbandry and dairying; (2) development of cooperatives; (3) village industries; (4) elementary education, especially the provision for school buildings; (5) rural water supply and a programme of minimum rural amenities, including the construction of approach roads; and (6) works programmes for the fuller utilization of manpower resources in the areas.

The block plans will include all social and economic activities undertaken in the block. This will call for (1) planning at the block and village levels, and (2) coordination of the plans undertaken by various departments within the block. It is stressed that some of the work projects will be best executed through labour cooperatives, which will provide tools to workers and take responsibility for the supervision and financing of the projects.

Panchayati Raj

The Draft Outline envisages that *Panchayati Raj*, involving a three-tiered structure of rural de-

mocracy, will make headway during the Third Plan period and the States which have not yet enacted legislation will do so before the commencement of the Third Plan. As a result, a network of village institutions will be established in the rural areas which will make effective democracy possible. Also, the ultimate responsibility for implementing development programmes in the block areas will devolve progressively on the block panchayat samitis, working with panchayats at the village level and with the Zila Parishads at the district level.

The Draft Outline, however, lays down the following four conditions necessary for the success of the scheme:

(1) The manner in which each panchayat samiti and panchayat makes an effort to mobilize local manpower and other resources, and the extent to which it can mobilize the cooperation of the people of the area.

(2) The ability of the district administration at all levels to make supplies and services available at the right time and to prevent loss due to waste or miss-application of funds.

(3) Panchayat samitis and panchayats should place their main emphasis on increasing agricultural production.

(4) Panchayat samitis and panchayats should give special attention to measures for raising the standard of living of the less privi-

leged sections of the community to the level of the more fortunate members.

It is stressed that these aspects should be emphasized in the training programmes organized by State Governments for members of panchayats, cooperatives and panchayat samitis. In the early stages, the administrative procedures may, however, provide for the necessary supervision and guidance to ensure that the overall priorities are observed in the development programmes at the district, block and village levels.

Intensive Agricultural Districts

Yet another suggestion made in the Draft Outline is to make an intensive effort to increase agricultural production in selected areas where conditions appear favourable on account of the availability of irrigation facilities and assured rainfall. To begin with, one district is proposed to be selected in each State. It is recommended that concerted efforts should be made in the selected district to reach all farmers through cooperatives and panchayats and to organize village production plans covering all agricultural families. It is hoped that the experience gained through this intensive agricultural programme can be profitably used in other parts of the country.

Adequate Provision for the Under-privileged

Finally, attention has been drawn to the fact that in the past the Community Development programme did not provide adequately for the less-privi-

leged sections of the village community. In fact it was pointed out in some quarters that the benefits mainly accrued to those comparatively better off. To eliminate this feeling, it has been recommended that the emphasis in the Community Development programme and the uses to which its resources are to be put should be increasingly utilized for the benefit of the under-privileged. It has been further suggested that the block organization can render useful service by assisting the implementation of land reforms. Other measures which the organization can adopt to the advantage of the poorer sections of the rural community include the expansion of subsidiary employment, stepping up of the productivity of village industries, organization of labour cooperatives and the fullest possible utilization of manpower resources.

COOPERATION AND AGRICULTURE

In the development of agriculture, cooperation in various forms has been assigned a vital role. Farmers generally lack resources necessary for stepping up agricultural productivity, such as credit for production purposes, improved seeds, fertilizers, irrigation facilities and, above all, the technical know-how. It is expected that the cooperatives would help them in obtaining and utilizing all these in a profitable manner. It is estimated that about 20 per cent of the total agricultural population has so far been covered by the cooperative societies. The programme of cooperative development in the future has to be based on two considerations, namely to enable as many agriculturist

families as possible to come within the fold of co-operation and to provide services or facilities on an adequate scale for their production programme.

The schemes relating to cooperative development during the Third Plan include advancing Rs. 675 crores to farmers through cooperatives, arranging for the marketing of 20 per cent of food crops and 30 per cent of cash crops through marketing societies and undertaking various processing activities such as cooperative sugar factories, cotton gins, oil crushing units, rice mills, etc.

To discharge effectively the role assigned to co-operatives in the development of the village economy, an integrated structure of cooperatives at various levels is envisaged. Service cooperatives at the village level will constitute the foundation of this structure. These cooperatives would be affiliated to central cooperative banks at the district level for obtaining agricultural production finance. In regard to supply and marketing functions, service cooperatives will be affiliated to marketing societies set up at the 'mandi' level. Thus with the support of central cooperative banks and marketing societies, service cooperatives would be able to provide short and medium term credit for agricultural production requisites to its members and also to assist in the arrangement for the marketing of their produce.

A programme of cooperative farming wherein land will be cultivated and managed jointly and where joint farming will be undertaken along with suitable village industries is also envisaged. To begin with, pilot projects will be set up to demon-

strate the advantages of cooperative farming. While it is contemplated that cooperative farming should be purely voluntary in character, it is expected that this mode of farming will be particularly beneficial to the small farmers especially the marginal and sub-marginal cultivators.

The philosophy and practice of cooperation have to be well understood by the members as well as employees and officers concerned with the activities. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that the programme for imparting education in the running of cooperatives is also implemented for various categories of personnel. Keeping this in view, an integrated training programme for officials and non-officials of the cooperative movement is being implemented.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & COOPERATION

The panchayat at the village level will be the statutory administrative institution for the planning and execution of all developmental activities when *Panchayati Raj* or Democratic Decentralization is implemented in all the States. The cooperative will be responsible for the economic development of the village. It will provide the organizational, financial and technical guidance for the development of the village economy. For efficient working a cooperative may have subsidiary associations like those of weavers, artisans, transport and building workers, brick makers, and cooperative farmers, etc.

III. CONCLUSION

Prime Minister Nehru has described the Community Development programme as a new chapter in the fascinating story of India. He has remarked that nothing has happened in any country of the world during the last few years so big in content and so revolutionary in design as the Community Development projects in India.

Whether it is in the north or south, east or west, the story of Community Development is the story of the people's efforts to improve their lot. Although economically backward, they have realized that they are themselves the architects of their destiny and can, by their own efforts, contribute to the betterment of their lives as well as to national development. The voluntary contribution of the people in the form of cash, kind and labour is a pointer.

Started in 55 blocks, which are more or less self-contained development units, the Community Development movement has been steadily spreading and will be in operation in over 5,000 such units, encompassing the entire rural population of India, by 1963.

The Community Development organization has been entrusted with the heavy responsibility of launching a self-directed mass movement for achieving self-sufficiency in foodgrains and raw mate-

rials in a country which measures about 2,000 miles from north to south and about 1,850 miles from east to west. The task is a challenge to the people of India, and the movement has been aptly described as one of the major social experiments of the twentieth century. This is a challenge that must be met successfully.

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